

James^{4/16/94} Earl Ray to get his day in court

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) - After 25 years, the confessed killer of Martin Luther King Jr. won a judge's permission Friday to call witnesses and put on evidence in court to try to prove his innocence.

James Earl Ray has been trying unsuccessfully to take back his guilty plea and go to trial since shortly after

he confessed in 1969 to murdering the civil rights leader April 4, 1968.

Criminal Court Judge Joseph Brown rejected Ray's latest plea for a trial but agreed to let his lawyers question witnesses and put on other courtroom evidence to prepare an appeal of that rejection.

"What's it been going on? A quar-

ter of a century so far? A few more months won't hurt one way or the other," Judge Brown said. "Let the historical record be cleared up."

Such a process will not overturn Ray's conviction or free him from prison where he is serving a 99-year sentence.